

## Linguistic Unity in the Balkans More Questions than Answers

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There are many similarities between the languages of the Balkan Peninsula, some superficial, others so profound that they must result from prolonged periods of popular and learned bilingualism. It is the aim of the present study to analyse some aspects of this so-called Balkan Linguistic Union which may be solely or partly a result of Greek influence, and to suggest lines of research which may help to interpret them.

Four branches of the Indo-European language family are represented in the Balkan Peninsula today. In alphabetical order: Albanian, Greek, Latin and Slavonic, the last two being represented respectively by Romanian<sup>1</sup> and by Bulgarian<sup>2</sup> and Serbian.<sup>3</sup> On the periphery of the region are two non-Indo-European languages, Hungarian and Turkish, which have had some influence on the Balkan languages.

All four language groups have been present in the Peninsula for a very long time: Albanian and Greek the longest. There are no dates for Albanian, though there is every reason to suppose that an earlier form of it was spoken in the Balkans at the same period as ancient Greek (Katičić, 1976: 184-85).<sup>4</sup> Greek-speaking peoples are thought to have entered the area around 1950 BC (Katičić, 1976: 30-37), and the absence of any reference in Greek sources to a migration of people who might be identified with the ancestors of the Albanians suggests that they may already have been present (Katičić, 1976: 184-85). Both groups have lived since historical times roughly in the areas they now occupy, but while the history of Greek is well documented, that of Albanian, like the other languages to be considered here, has large areas of obscurity. It may be that further work on

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Greek sources would succeed in elucidating some of the problems, and better characterize the obvious but mysterious linguistic unity of the Balkan.

There are two main dialects of Albanian, dating from before the sixteenth century: Gheg in northern Albania and Kosovo, Tosk in the south. Tosk is more or less the basis of the present national standard, and the dialects of the Albanian settlements in north-western Greece (fourteenth century) and southern Italy (fifteenth century) are also Tosk in origin (Lockwood, 1972: 186). The Romans began occupying the Albanian lands in 146 BC, and the influence of Latin on Albanian ended only with the division of the Roman Empire into the Western and Eastern Empires in AD 395.

Romanian was formed on a broad territory on both banks of the Danube, in Roman Dacia (AD 106-271) and Moesia (27 BC-AD 395), evolving slowly from Latin. In the absence of textual evidence, there seems no point in attempting to designate any precise period as marking the end of spoken Latin and the beginning of Common Romanian: the sixth, seventh, eighth and even ninth centuries have been suggested (Caragiu Marioțeanu, 1977: 99; Rosetti, 1986: 322-23; Coteanu, 1969: 20-23; Mihăescu, 1993: 159-60). It can be assumed that many groups of Romanian speakers were very mobile, moving in patterns of seasonal migration with their flocks. Gradually, identifiable groups broke away permanently from the main mass, so that now Romanian comprises four dialects: Dacoromanian, north of the Danube; Aromanian and Meglenoromanian in many localities in Albania, Macedonia and Greece south to the Pindus Mountains; and Istroromanian on the Istrian peninsula<sup>5</sup> (Caragiu Marioțeanu, 1977: 101-09).

Bulgarian is descended from one branch of South Slavonic, which was being used in modern Bulgaria in the late sixth century at the earliest (Lockwood, 1972: 145).

The borders of each language in the early centuries of our era cannot be given with precision, but an essential underlying feature is the line separating the Greek from the Latin speaking area of the Balkans at that time. This line, usually known after the scholar who was first responsible for tracing it as the Jireček line, slants across the peninsula north-west from modern Vlorë, passing just south of Skopje and north of Sofia to reach the coastal plain near Varna.

In some areas, invasion and subsequent intermarriage, or alternatively flight, led to the disappearance of one or more languages, but each Balkan language has retained its ancient heartland, plus out-posts. South of the Danube especially, bi- or pluri-lingualism of whole communities was - and still is - the norm. The mother tongue was always, however, a sign of ethnicity, and often of lifestyle, and people guarded it as jealously as they did their way of life. And yet, while

<sup>5</sup> Only Dacoromanian, the national language of Romania, has a standard literary form. It also has recognizable sub-dialects. The Aromanians separated from the main group in the ninth or early tenth century, the Meglenoromanians two to three centuries later, and the Istroromanians probably moved west by the thirteenth century; but there is still some doubt as to dates.

<sup>1</sup> Romanian is a Balkan language because three of its four dialects are spoken south of the Danube. It can also be argued that the life-style of Romanian society north of the river is as akin to life in the south as its language is to the southern forms.

<sup>2</sup> Bulgarian here includes the closely related Slavonic idiom Macedonian, which according to Bulgarian scholars is a south-western dialect of Bulgarian.

<sup>3</sup> The traditional term Serbo-Croat is not appropriate here, because the Serbian dialects are much closer to the other Balkan languages than are the Croatian; and even Serbian is something of a peripheral Balkan language.

<sup>4</sup> It is uncertain whether this ancestor of Albanian was an Illyrian or a Thracian language.

remaining separate, the various language groups established links with each other: they traded, they exchanged ideas, they learned the language of the local administration, and gradually adopted aspects of their neighbours' lifestyle that seemed superior or merely more convenient to them.

As with their lifestyle, so with their languages: still separate yet sharing words, expressions and structures to such an extent that many scholars have suggested that Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek and Romanian form a Balkan Linguistic Union, and a Linguistic Atlas and even a Balkan Grammar have been suggested for them (Asenova, 1977: 23-31).

On the most superficial level, there are many shared words, originating in one language and adopted by some or all of the others. Sometimes the source-language is difficult to determine, or a word is claimed as its own by two languages; but whatever the history of the individual words, there can be no doubt that ideas, objects, or just names, have always been exchanged. However, they travel so easily that they do not require an intimate knowledge of the source language.

Phrases, sayings, proverbs and so on, on the other hand, can only be understood and translated by a bilingual. Many very precise ones have spread widely in the Balkans, and scholars have analysed a number of them (Djamo-Diaconiță, 1968: 277-92). For example, the saying *Selling cucumbers to a market-gardener*, the equivalent of the English *Taking coals to Newcastle*, is found in the core Balkan languages (Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek and Romanian), one close neighbour (Serbian) and a peripheral language (Turkish). The only variation is that in Turkish, and in the Aromanian dialect of Romanian, the cucumbers are replaced by leeks (Djamo-Diaconiță, 1968: 281). The origin of this saying has not been identified, but some others can be considered more likely to have originated in one language than another, for cultural reasons. An example is *A good cheese in the skin of a dog* - a mocking judgement on a clever person spoiled by bad habits. It exists in Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian and Serbian, and is thought most likely to have been coined in Albanian or Romanian sheep farming communities, where cheese was and is highly prized (Djamo-Diaconiță, 1968: 289). Clearly, the origin of these and the many other expressions noted by Djamo-Diaconiță can only be clarified by historical studies of the traditional cultures of the Balkans.

That aspect of a language which is least likely to be influenced by external forces is the morphosyntactic system, yet it is here that some or all of the Balkan languages show profound and often unexplained similarities. Why is the structure of the analytical future the same in southern Albanian (Tosk) and Daco-Romanian? Why is the infinitive little used or completely absent in Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek and pre-nineteenth-century Romanian? The founder of the discipline of Balkan Linguistics, Sandfeld, held the simplistic and ultimately untenable view that as Greek was the only language of the region with a long literary tradition, it was the major source of these and other morphosyntactic similarities (Sandfeld, 1930). The evidence suggests more and more clearly that

neither this nor any other simple solution is sufficient. It is impossible to be certain about the importance of literary influence, because only Greek and South Slavonic have any texts for the Byzantine period, and these do not reflect the languages as they were used in everyday life in the villages.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the importance of the spoken languages in encouraging linguistic innovations must not be under-estimated in this region above all.

It remains true that although present-day plurilingual communities, in Australia as in the Balkans, give one the distinct feeling that a literary tradition is not necessary for one language to influence another, familiarity with other languages is extremely difficult to judge for a remote period lacking in records of daily life. The leading Albanian specialist of today, Shaban Demiraj, maintains that although Greek was the official language of the Byzantine administration and the Orthodox Church, it was not known to the bulk of the population and its influence was essentially on the lexicon of the other Balkan languages (Demiraj, 1988: 63). This is an assertion which needs to be investigated by scholars of the Byzantine empire, and tested as far as possible by an analysis of the Greek texts which circulated in Greek and in Slavonic translations in the Balkans.

Latin too may have had a role to play. Until the late sixth century it was used beside Greek as one of the languages of administration, justice and the army throughout the Eastern Empire. Greek was the language and culture of most of the people living south of the Jireček line, and gradually Latin ceased to be used as an official language in this region; but Greek never replaced Latin as the vernacular in the northern half of the Balkans. Moreover, Latin had a strong influence on the Greek lexicon, about three thousand words being borrowed, although the reverse was not true: the Latin of South-Eastern Europe contains very few words of Greek origin (Mihăescu, 1993: 337-42).

In spite of this considerable lexical influence, albeit one way, it would be imprudent to suggest that there was any morphosyntactic influence of Latin on Greek or vice versa. A comparison with the influence of Norman French on English in the four centuries following the invasion of 1066 may be instructive here. In spite of strong lexical influence - up to twenty per cent of the modern English lexicon can be attributed to Norman French - there is no proven morphosyntactic influence at all (Baugh, 1959: 197, 200; Strang, 1970: 218).

It is indeed doubtful whether outside influence ever brings a completely new structure into a language: the most that happens is that an already existing structure may be reinforced and made more popular if it is a frequently-used feature of a neighbouring vernacular or a prestigious language used for religious or cultural reasons. In the Balkan Peninsula, Greek was both a spoken idiom and a learned language, as was Latin in the early centuries, until it ceased to be the language of administration and its spoken form diverged sufficiently to be called Romanian. South Slavonic arrived as a vernacular spoken by farming communities, but it became a literary language (Old Church Slavonic, and later

<sup>6</sup> The earliest Romanian and Albanian texts date from the sixteenth century (1521 and 1555 respectively).



Bulgarian). The other languages, Romanian and Albanian, were mother-tongues of widespread and highly mobile communities throughout the Balkans, but did not have the prestige of a written form. This does not mean that they could not influence other languages.

To demonstrate the subtleties of the mutual influences between the Balkan languages, it is proposed to study the changing structure of the analytic future and the gradual disappearance of the infinitive, from Byzantine times to the present.

The expression in the Balkan languages of future action shows a complex pattern of similarities, with the easy answers contradicted by unexpected differences. Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek and Romanian all form the future tense by means of a particle derived from the verb "to want" or, particularly in the medieval period and in some dialects, "to have", preceding a form of the required verb. Earlier scholars were dogmatic: according to Sandfeld (Sandfeld, 1930: 180-85) "have" represented Latin and Romance influence, "want" Greek. Others, most notably Weigand (Weigand, 1925: v-xv), saw both as having their origin in an ancient language: Thracian or what he called "Thraco-Albanian."

Taking the languages one by one, from the south, the Modern Greek  $\theta\alpha$  + subjunctive ("want") is the end result of a long and hesitant odyssey from the Hellenistic and Roman period when the Classical Greek future was more and more often replaced by  $\epsilon\chi\omega$  + infinitive ("have"), or  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$  + infinitive ("want") with a nuance of will rather than obligation (Browning, 1969: 38-40; Mirambel, 1966: 182).  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$  + infinitive, and during or just after the tenth century  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$   $\nu\alpha$  + subjunctive, became more frequent, and gradually the latter -  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$   $\nu\alpha$  + subjunctive - came to predominate. The modern, reduced version of it,  $\theta\alpha$  + subjunctive, is first attested in the 16th century (Mirambel, 1966: 187).<sup>7</sup>

The Albanian structures are similar to the Greek, but their distribution suggests that they are native (Demiraj, 1971: 137-51; Demiraj, 1972: 21-31). *kam* [me ba] "have [to do]" is preferred in the northern dialect (Gheg) and in the Albanian dialects of Italy, and occurs occasionally in southern Albanian (Tosk) from the end of the 16th century. *do* [të bëj] "want [to do]" must be relatively old, as the verb has a reduced, invariable form, and it is present in all Albanian dialects, including those of Greece and Italy. The modern identification of "have" with Gheg and "want" with Tosk is irrelevant for the history of the Albanian future, since both are found in the earliest text, a northern one (1555). It is possible that "have" is the older, since it is the most common structure in the Italian dialects of Albanian, which are known to derive from medieval southern Albanian. Thus both structures are old, both are widespread, and the modern geographical distinction does not mean that it was always so, or even that it is more than a convenient generalisation. Demiraj's interpretation, that the origin of the two types of future is to be sought in an original distinction, later eroded,

<sup>7</sup> The stages  $\theta\epsilon$   $\nu\alpha$ ,  $\theta\alpha$   $\nu\alpha$ ,  $\theta\alpha\nu$  are still found in some dialects.

between the future of obligation (*futurum necessitatis*) and the future of will (*futurum voluntatis*) makes more sense than an original geographical distinction (Demiraj, 1971: 151). It is at least plausible to suggest that the geographical distinction came about during the Ottoman period (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries) when communications between north and south were very difficult and each dialect evolved in a vacuum.

Romanian, almost alone among the Romance idioms, has preferred "want" to "have", and has retained the Late Latin order: "want" + verb. "Want" was already found in Classical Latin with a meaning close to the future (Grandgent, 1907: 57), whereas "have" was not established until the end of the Empire (Bourciez, 1946: 118). Every dialect - except Meglenoromanian which has no distinctive future - has a version of the verb "want".

It is tempting to suggest that the future tense constructed with "want" in Albanian as well as Romanian may reflect the spoken Latin of the period of Roman domination of the Balkan Peninsula. The Romanian verb "want" is the descendant of the Late Latin: *a vrea* < \**volere*. The Albanian is a native structure: *do* < *dua*, and could therefore be a calque on the Latin structure. The examples of "have" in Late Latin texts mean that it could be a source of the Albanian form with *kam*.

The possibility of Latin influence on Albanian structures is in truth very plausible. Latin was until the sixth century the language of administration of the regions in which Albanian was the predominant native language and it had such a strong lexical influence on Albanian that if, as seems likely, Latin was known by large numbers of native-speakers of Albanian, structural influence must be a possibility. The form of a tense is such an intimate element of a language that it can be borrowed from elsewhere only by bilingual speakers. Greek influence on the evolution of the future in Albanian seems less likely, except perhaps to reinforce "want" in Tosk, because both Albanian structures are so widespread in all dialects that they are probably as old as the similar Greek structures.

The choice made slowly in the course of the medieval period by Greek and probably by Albanian has to be explained by the circumstances of each language. Could both have been influenced by Latin? The parallel evolution of the future in Greek and Albanian hints at a common trigger, and given the date of the Greek changes (Albanian cannot be dated for lack of texts) the action of a hypothetical substratum common to both languages seems unlikely; but it may be that an attentive reading of Classical Greek texts could show ancient underlying preferences, nuances of meaning which became evident when an analytic future was being developed.

Bulgarian shows paradigms based on the same verbs as the other Balkan languages, but distributed in an original way. It seems to have been the recipient, not the instigator, of the Balkan analytic futures: Old Church Slavonic, from which it descends, had no specific form for the future, but used the present tense, though often future time was indicated by "want" or "have" + infinitive (Lunt, 1974: 135). After hesitating during the Byzantine period between "want" and "have", today Bulgarian forms the affirmative future with an



invariable form of "want" + present tense, the negative with an invariable form of "have not" + present tense. The likelihood of Greek influence could perhaps be tested through close study of translations from Greek into Slavonic, both religious texts and the popular secular translations of legends, chronicles, scientific works and almanacs.

The structural variants auxiliary + infinitive and auxiliary + present tense are characteristic of all the Balkan languages at some period, and lead directly to consideration of another intriguing Balkan phenomenon: the partial or complete loss of the infinitive.

The partial or complete absence of a structure which is recognized as an infinitive is one of the most striking and enigmatic features of the Balkan Linguistic Union. In all languages, a finite subordinate clause is either preferred or is now the only way of introducing a second verb into a sentence, whether or not the two verbs have the same subject. This innovation is thought to have had its origins in Greek (Joseph, 1983: 37-84),<sup>8</sup> in the late Classical period (it is found in the mid-fifth century BC, in the work of Thucydides), but there are some doubts as to whether this can have been its sole starting point, because it begins to weaken so early in the other languages, as we shall show. More needs to be known about bilingualism among the peoples of the Balkans, and the circulation of texts in Greek and Slavonic during the Byzantine period.

However, as Byzantine Greek is usually considered to be the source of the decline of the infinitive in other Balkan languages, it is convenient to start with an account of its history in that language. By about the sixth century, the many endings of the infinitives were reduced to orthographical variants of a single phonetic form: [in], and the contexts in which the infinitive was used were increasingly restricted.<sup>9</sup> In Medieval Greek (eleventh to seventeenth centuries), successive manuscripts of the same text shift from an infinitive to a finite construction: for example, the fourteenth-century Copenhagen manuscript of the Chronicle of the Morea and the fifteenth-century Paris one. But in the sixteenth century the infinitive had still not disappeared as a recognizable category, a conclusion which is amply supported by the forms of the future still current at this period.

The remnants of the infinitive surviving now in Modern Greek are negligible: the invariable form used in the formation of the perfect, pluperfect and future perfect tenses is historically an infinitive, but no longer perceived as such; there

such; there are a handful of fixed phrases; and in the Greek dialects of Southern Italy the infinitive may be used in a few contexts (Rohlf, 1958: 735).

The early date of the beginning of the decline of the infinitive in favour of finite constructions suggests that it was an internal innovation. It seems to make its appearance far too late to be attributable to substratum influence, and there is no evidence of an external influence on Greek strong enough to bring about such a far-reaching structural change. Could the complexity of the Classical Greek infinitive forms have led to their being avoided in all but the commonest contexts? This is a question which can only be answered by careful analysis of late Classical and Byzantine texts.

Can the other Balkan languages which share the phenomenon throw any light on its development? Joseph, the most recent specialist to consider the infinitive in all Balkan languages, considers that the reasons for its decline are simply unknown (Joseph, 1983: 244-46), and the evidence is so contradictory that this may indeed be the wisest conclusion.

The case of Albanian is perplexing if the decline of the infinitive is an internal phenomenon in Greek, because while the Greek infinitive is still recognizable in sixteenth-century texts, by then Albanian had no traces of such a category. Now, it does have impersonal forms which perform some of the functions normally attributed to an infinitive: *me ba* ("to do") in Gheg and *për të bërë* ("to do") in Tosk and other dialects. Only *me ba* is pre-sixteenth century, *për të bërë* and some similar impersonal constructions appearing after the earliest texts. The existence of these analytical forms performing the function of an infinitive is taken by Albanian specialists to indicate that Albanian once had a synthetic infinitive which it lost early, replacing it usually by a finite subjunctive clause but in some contexts by *me ba* (and subsequently by *për të bërë* and other forms) (Demiraj, 1970: 125-30; Demiraj, 1988: 63). It seems, then, that Albanian lost its infinitive (assuming, with Demiraj, that it did have one), before Greek, which makes a Greek origin of this modification doubtful.

The most plausible explanation of the absence of an infinitive in modern Albanian is that a preference in the language for a finite clause over whatever infinitival structure existed in the older language was strengthened by a similar preference in Greek. Given that morphosyntactic innovations in any language are founded on an already existing possibility, it is most likely that the potential choice between an infinitive and a finite clause lay unregarded in ancient Greek and Albanian until circumstances gave preference to one over the other.

The history of the loss of a hypothetical infinitive cannot be chronicled in Albanian because of a lack of texts, but an analysis of the rise of the finite clause at the expense of the infinitive in the Romanian dialects shows how internal variants and external influences may gradually alter the balance in favour of one structure over another.

In Late Spoken Latin the functions of the infinitive changed somewhat (Grandgent, 1907: 50-51), and seem to have broadened in spite of the decline of the accusative and infinitive construction. In the Western Empire it acquired the functions of the supine and the gerund, and tended to be used instead of certain

<sup>8</sup> Joseph is the source of information about the loss of the infinitive in Greek, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>9</sup> In early Christian texts, alternation between infinitive and finite verb is found in most contexts, but in some only the infinitive occurs: "be about to", "ought", "can", "begin", when there is no change of subject. Sporadic use of the infinitive with these verbs is still found in Medieval Greek (see also Browning, 1969: 68), and it is precisely these verbs which in Old Romanian tend to be used with an infinitive.



subordinate clauses. In Romanian, however, it did not replace the supine, which has survived as a separate category, and a comparison of the four dialects shows that although the infinitive was a vital element in Common Romanian it is unlikely that it ever had the crucial role which it plays in Western Romance.

The existence of Romanian dialects which have developed more or less separately from each other for several hundred years allows us to come to some conclusions about the early evolution of the infinitive versus a finite clause. In Aromanian, widely spoken in the southern Balkans, the infinitive has lost its verbal value completely, being used only as a substantive. In Meglenoromanian, a very localised dialect, the infinitive is commonly used as a substantive, but has retained its verbal function optionally after a modal verb, especially "can". In Istroromanian, evolving for the past seven hundred years in isolation from the other dialects, the infinitive seems to have similar functions to the infinitive in the Western Romance languages.

It can therefore be concluded that both structures were inherited by Common Romanian from Latin and that the infinitive was in retreat by the time Aromanian separated from Dacoromanian in the early tenth century; but even when Istroromanian separated, probably in the thirteenth century, it was still an essential part of spoken Dacoromanian.

In Aromanian and Meglenoromanian, the subsequent virtual or complete loss of the infinitive was assured by bilingualism with Greek or Albanian of large numbers of speakers. The tight-knit Meglenoromanian groups have shown less permeability to the surrounding Greek than have the more widely-diffused and mobile Aromanian communities. The evidence provided by Dacoromanian texts suggests that the infinitive had become progressively more restricted to formal and religious contexts, so that by the sixteenth century the finite clause was frequently used and often preferred (Diaconescu, 1965: 167-70). It is impossible to be sure whether the influence was from the written to the spoken language or vice versa, or whether in both speech and writing the finite clause was felt to be a more suitable structure in most contexts.

Between the end of the sixteenth century and the 1830s, when French influence gave a new lease of life to the infinitive, there was a continued decline in the frequency of the infinitive in Dacoromanian. On the eve of the linguistic renaissance of the 1820s and 1830s, "begin" and "can" were the only verbs which governed an infinitive with any frequency at all (Close, 1974: 227-31). At that point, however, an influx of French books and somewhat literal translations from French rescued the infinitive from near-extinction. It became a mark of elegance to use it, and it has flourished. Now, it is regarded as an integral part of the language, a useful stylistic variant. Nevertheless, in spite of intense French influence at some periods and on some writers, the infinitive is still less frequent than the finite clause in most styles of writing, and in the spoken language.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Graur, 1968: 323 analyses a small sample of infinitive versus finite structures with no change of subject, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, in texts taken from Gaster's *Crestomație*. These show a steady reduction in frequency of

Dacoromanian has thus regained a productive infinitive, under the influence of a related and prestigious language. Had it lost ground originally under the influence of another prestigious language, in the early, hidden centuries of its development? Could Greek influence have been strong enough then, and if so, was it literary or spoken or both? Was the Greek finite structure itself sufficiently dominant in Byzantine times to encourage the preference? In the present state of knowledge this seems unlikely. On the other hand, there must be a possibility that the importance of both structures in the earliest sources available to us in Romanian, like their presence in Greek from the late Classical period, is not unconnected with the dominance of the finite clause in pre-sixteenth century Albanian. It may be that the preference for a finite clause over the infinitive is a very ancient Balkan morphosyntactic phenomenon, existing in languages which are now lost but continuing to exist through its expression in Greek, Albanian and Romanian. This hypothesis does not suppose substratum influence on any language, but the influence of a neighbouring language on those known to us.

Bulgarian lends support to such a hypothesis, because it too, although South Slavonic did not reach the Balkan Peninsula until the sixth century, no longer has an infinitive, if we exclude a few dialectal vestiges which are isolated and no longer recognizable as infinitives (Joseph, 1983: 101-48). In addition, the eastern Serbian dialects (Torlak, S-E Banat) make little use of the infinitive, while the other Serbian dialects show alternation between the two structures. Looking back, we find that in Old Church Slavonic, the literary version of South Slavonic, the infinitive was already losing ground to the finite clause. A leading specialist on the infinitive in Bulgarian has suggested that the finite clause was only tolerated in Old Church Slavonic as an approximation of the Greek structure and that such clauses in fourteenth-century Bulgarian literature can "reasonably be assumed to derive from the colloquial language, in which they were presumably already well-established" (MacRobert, 1980: 31). These two statements suggest that the disappearance of the infinitive was due to the influence of a neighbouring spoken and literary language, Greek, via bilingual communities and translations. Study of translations of Greek religious and secular texts might help elucidate the process by which this Balkan phenomenon became accepted in South Slavonic, just as a study of translations from French into Romanian showed how the infinitive was rescued in that language. This could only be a partial explanation for Bulgarian, however, because of the pre-eminence of spoken contact between language groups. Moreover, in this plurilingual region south of the Danube the possible influence of other neighbours, the very mobile Albanian and Aromanian communities, must not be discounted. The Greek contribution can be examined through literary sources, the

the infinitive, and an increase of the finite clause. A study of newspaper articles undertaken in 1976 by an Honours student at Flinders University (S. Kimpton) showed a ratio of finite to infinitive structures of two or three (depending on the author) to one. It is time such an exercise was repeated using contemporary texts.

discounted. The Greek contribution can be examined through literary sources, the Albanian and Aromanian can only be imagined through comparison with other plurilingual communities

Even if it is not possible to be certain about the origins of the morphosyntactic structures discussed above, it would seem that Greek as the pre-eminent language of culture played a large part in initiating or diffusing them. Comparative studies of texts in Greek and South Slavonic, and for the later period in Albanian and Romanian, may suggest the direction of influence in some cases. But whatever the answers to these technical questions, the overwhelming impression given by a study of linguistic parallels between the Balkan languages is of long-standing daily contact between the speakers of very different languages, leading to a lasting underlying unity of the modern Balkan languages and peoples.

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